

New York State
Departments of Health and Labor

Health Workforce Retraining Initiative

2006 Request for Applications

Questions and Answers

RFA #0605231220

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Please Note:

MODIFICATIONS TO THE RFA

Modification 1:

“Attachment 1 – Project Cover Sheet” on page of 25 of the RFA should be completed exactly as written. Disregard the instructions for this attachment on page 14 of the RFA. Do NOT include the total amount of grant funds requested for the project in each region or the number of participants in each region on the Project Cover Sheet.

Modification 2:

The definition of “Project” on RFA Page 13 has been modified.

The modified definition of project is as follows:

A set of activities required to train and place workers in a *single occupation*, e.g., radiology technician, CNAs, LPNs and RNs. An applicant may propose more than one project in a single application. Applications that include multiple projects must include discrete budgets for each project and should include discrete narratives and work plan documents for each project. Aggregate narratives, budgets and work plans for more than one project will not be accepted.

Modification 3:

The Maximum Number of Pages outlined on RFA Page 21 “Application Format” is CORRECT. Page lengths detailed in pages 14-20 that do not agree with those outlined on page 21 should be disregarded.

NOTE: WHEN SENDING APPLICATIONS, PLEASE WRITE “HWRI APPLICATION SUBMISSION” ON THE ENVELOPE

I. Eligible Organizations

Q1: Are the following types of organizations eligible to apply?

Not-for-profit Ambulance Company;
FDNY EMS;
501(c)(3) Foundations;
Adult care facilities;
Hospices;
Proprietary school;
Certified home health agency;

Governmental agency, county health department or OMRDD;
Management entity on behalf of a consortium/alliance of health care facilities

A: Yes.

Q2: Are the following organizations eligible to apply?

Entity that is not incorporated;
Healthcare benefits provider;
Economic development agency

A: No.

Q3: Can a private, for-profit clinical testing laboratory be a partner in an application?

A: Yes.

Q4: Do the applicant and the trainer have to be two separate organizations?

A: No.

Q5: If a facility is part of a consortium of health care facilities and educational institutions, would they have to use the consortium educational institutions, or could they use an outside educational institution?

A: They could use either.

Q6: Can an organization be part of more than one application, e.g., apply on their own and as part of a consortium?

A: Yes. An organization can be part of more than one application.

Q7: If a health system has various facilities, can each facility submit an application or do we have to submit one application on behalf of the system?

A: 1) A health systems can apply as a whole entity. 2) The facilities can apply on their own. 3)The system can apply and the individual institutions can apply for different projects.

Q8: Can an educational organization be in one region and the healthcare facilities be in another region?

A: Yes. The applicant would request grant funds from the region in which the healthcare facility with workers to be trained is located.

Q9: If we have healthcare facilities in different regions, do we submit separate projects?

A: Yes.

Q10: Should we apply as a collaborative effort?

A: There is no preference for applying as a consortium/collaborative effort.

Q11: Would it be better if the applicant were the health care facility or the educational institution?

A: There is no preference. The organization most capable of successfully implementing the project should be the applicant.

II. Letters of Participation

Q12: If a health system, health network or healthcare corporation applies on behalf of several member healthcare facilities, do we need letters of participation from each of the member facilities involved in the project?

Q13: If an applicant has letters of participation from hundreds of facilities, is it necessary to provide each and every letter?

Q14: Can an association that represents many facilities, such as 60 home care agencies, submit one letter of participation on behalf of all agencies?

Q15: Do we need letters of participation from all possible participating organizations? It is difficult to foresee all of the organizations that might be involved over a three year period. Can organizations change over the course of the contract?

Q16: What if the vendor selection is not completed by the time the application is due and we cannot get letters of participation?

Q17: If a healthcare facility applicant has instructors in-house, but needs to hire an outside consultant to conduct a portion of the training, would a letter of participation from the consultant be required?

Q18: If we are a licensed home care agency with a training program, can we have other home care agencies send workers to training and get letters of participation from these outside agencies?

Q19: For projects proposing to expand educational capacity, would we need letters of participation from all of our clinical sites, or only those at which we are proposing to expand the number of clinical slots?

A: Letters of Participation are required from each organization that has a stake in the success of a training project whether it is a healthcare facility or training organization. This is to ensure that the partners have identified potential participants and have the health care employers and trainers ready to begin the implementation of each proposed project shortly after awards are made and contracts executed.

The only exception to obtaining letters from individual health care facilities is in the situation where a health system, network, corporation or trade association represents member facilities and can ensure that each member facility is a willing participant in the project and has identified potential participants and other resources as may be necessary to successfully implement the proposed projects shortly after awards are made and contracts executed. These organizations may submit one letter for each region in which they have proposed projects on behalf of their member agencies.

Applicants are not expected to complete vendor selection prior to award notification. DOH will consider allowing successful applicants to add vendors that were not mentioned in the application on a case by case basis with adequate justification during the grant cycle.

DOH reserves the right to reduce awards if grantees fail to implement projects on time because they or their partners were unprepared to implement projects.

Q20: What should be included in a letter of participation from an educational organization?

A: The letter of participation should describe the role of the organization in the project. Please refer to page 16 of the RFA.

Q21: If an educational institution has currently enrolled RNs in a doctoral program, and we are proposing to train them as nursing faculty to work at the educational institution, would we need any letters of participation?

A: No.

Q22: If a healthcare facility is the applicant and has its own training program, do they need letters of participation?

A: No.

III. Eligible Participants

Q23: How long must someone be on staff (working as a health care employee) before they are eligible for training?

Q24: How long does a foreign trained health care worker have to be working in health care in the U.S. to participate in the program?

A: There is no minimum length of employment requirements for this program. A newly hired worker is not eligible for training in the job for which they were hired.

Q25: If a physician is on staff but does not manage others, are they eligible for training?

Q26: If we are applying for process improvement or foreign language training to be given to various titles, are physicians eligible?

A: No. Physicians and physicians in training are not eligible for training under this program. Please refer to page 1 of the RFA.

Q27: Can we train:
Cooks/dishwashers in healthcare facilities;
Maintenance/physical plant workers in healthcare facilities;
Secretaries in healthcare facilities;
Health care workers from community based organizations;
Health care employees from outside our organization?
Home health aides who work in assisted living programs;
Social workers or psychologists;
Case Managers;
Managers or administrative staff

A: Yes. Any individual currently working in the health care industry, or having worked in healthcare in the past, except a physician or physician-in-training, is eligible for training.

Q28: Can we include training for NYSDOH employees?

A: Yes, as long as they are current or former health care employees.

Q29: If a health care worker took several years off for child rearing, or is currently not working for other reasons, and wanted to re-enter the health care workforce, are they eligible for training to update their skills?

A: Yes.

Q30: Is there a preference that the participants come from the applicant facility versus from another facility?

A: No.

Q31: Are people working at an HIV/AIDS Council be considered eligible participants?

A: Eligible participants are individuals employed by an organization involved in the provision of healthcare services.

Q32: If a person were on a lay off list at a health care facility, but currently working in a non-clinical position, are they eligible?

A: Yes.

Q33: Can we train people to enter the health care industry who have never been previously employed in health care?

A: No. The program targets health industry workers or laid off health industry workers.

Q34: If a person was laid off from a health care position in a neighboring state facility but they live in New York, are they eligible?

A: Yes. They are eligible as long as they are, or were, a health industry worker and live in NYS.

Q35: What if the same laid off individual did not live in New York?

A: No.

Q36: Is an individual eligible for training if their health experience was gained outside the U.S.?

A: If the individual is a current health care worker in NYS or is a laid-off healthcare worker and currently residing in NYS, they are eligible for training.

Q37: If a person received their health care training in a foreign country but is now working in a health care position in the U.S. (e.g., a foreign trained nurse is now working as a nurse aide in the U.S.), are they eligible for training?

A: Yes.

Q38: Are hospital volunteers eligible for training?

A: No.

IV. Eligible Activities

Q39: Are the following eligible activities?

- Training managers in management development;
- Training RNs and LPNs in new skills;
- Soft skills training, e.g., customer service;
- Specialty gerontology training;
- Spanish language competency training;
- Driver Education if a person is being trained for a new position which requires driving;
- Training employees with a BS in Pharmacy in a distance learning Doctor of Pharmacy degree;
- Training foreign born nurses to get them NYS nurse certification;
- Basic education training such as remediation, GED, assessment, or literacy training

A: Yes.

Q40: Is the list of training types on page 7 an exhaustive list?

A: No. It is a list of examples in each training type.

Q41: Is distance learning or web-based training allowed?

A: Yes.

Q42: If a web-based training is used in all regions, would the cost be dispersed between regions, or would it be included in the region where the broadcast is coming from?

A: Since the participants viewing the broadcast are in all regions, you would have to allocate the cost to all regions as appropriate.

Q43: Is it allowable to train an individual in a full time training program (e.g., RN/LPN training), since the participant will not be working at all during the training period?

Q44: Can we train participants who are in school part-time?

A: Yes.

Q45: If we train for an upgraded position, will this funding support the upgraded salary after training has been completed?

A: No.

Q46: If we have a training program that is longer than 3 years (e.g., Bachelor's Degree), would that be an eligible project?

A: Yes. However we would expect that the applicant would describe their plans to continue supporting the students through the program until they complete their degrees.

Q47: Can we train for corporate compliance or for the orientation of new employees?

A: This program does not support training in basic facility compliance or orientation of new employees.

Q48: Can we hire LPNs from outside our agency to work part-time and train them as RNs?

A: Yes.

Q49: Can we apply to train more employees in a program for which we have received or are currently receiving funding?

A: Yes, provided there is a documented need for the training of additional participants. This funding cannot be used to train participants currently being served under another contract. It is advisable that an applicant cross-reference other existing projects that are the same and describe the relationship to the current application.

Q50: Can we require a work commitment from participants after training?

A: We do not require a work commitment from participants. That is between a grantee and its employees.

V. Funding/Cost Eligibility

Q51: Will the grant cover out-of-area/state training costs such as hotels, meals, etc.?

Q52: Can expansion of educational capacity include costs for recruitment of faculty?

Q53: Would equipment and laboratories be allowable costs under expansion of educational capacity?

Q54: If a project requires the design of new program or a new instructional course, can we include the program/curriculum development costs in our application?

Q55: Are capital costs, such as leasing space to provide classes, equipment costs or space rehabilitation instead of space rental eligible for funding?

A: To the extent an application can document and justify the need for such costs and they are not listed as an ineligible cost on page 7 of the RFA, they will be considered.

Q56: Is there a maximum amount we can request for a project or application?

A: No.

Q57: Is there a cap on administration?

Q58: Can indirect costs be included and where would they go in the budget?

A: The proposed budget must be broken out by line item as opposed to a composite line such as overhead/indirect or administration. All proposed staffing and NPS needs to be included in the line item budget and budget narrative as detailed in the RFA instructions. We would expect proposed budgets to include many of the costs that would be included in an overhead/administration/indirect line; however, we are requiring that applicants describe these costs individually as they relate to the implementation of the HWRI project(s).

Q59: Will this grant cover the cost of replacement workers while participants have school breaks, e.g., winter, summer and spring break?

A: Funding can only be used to support replacement costs during the time that a participant is in class and commuting to class.

Q60: Under a process improvement project, can we include costs related to a patient satisfaction survey to be used in assessing the effectiveness of the proposed training?

A: Limited and targeted studies directly related to a proposed HWRI process improvement project will be considered. The studies should have focused and targeted measures with pre and post survey data to measure the impact of the actual change in consumer satisfaction directly attributable to the training under the proposed HWRI project.

Q61: If we submit a three year proposal, but year one is much more expensive due to curriculum development/project start-up, would the project be scored lower in the financial evaluation?

A: No. The unit cost to be used for the financial evaluation is based on the total request for the duration of the grant.

Q62: For expansion of educational capacity projects, you require that training occur during the course of the grant. Would the faculty supported by the grant only be allowed to train grant participants?

A: No. We will reimburse this faculty cost to the extent that it is associated with the training of HWRI grant participants. So, while we do not require that faculty be 100% dedicated to the grant, we will only reimburse that portion of faculty cost associated with the grant.

Q63: Will all expansion of educational capacity projects be reviewed against each other in a region regardless of what occupation is being expanded?

A: Projects are measured against the requirements in the RFA for the technical proposal. Only in the financial evaluation will projects compete against each other within a region

Q64: Must we get three bids from possible participating organizations before including one in our application?

A: We do not require three bids, however we would expect applicants to choose participating organizations based on the applicant's standard procurement practices and follow all other applicable state and federal guidelines.

Q65: Are the costs of professional licenses supported?

A: No. Funding may be requested for licensure exams but not for license fees. Please refer to page 7 of the RFA.

Q66: When requesting lost staff time funding, must facilities cover part of the costs, or can the full cost be requested through the grant?

A: The full salary cost of lost staff time can be supported by these funds. Fringe benefits are not allowable in lost staff time or wage subsidies.

Q67: Is there a match requirement?

A: There is no match or in-kind requirement in this program.

Q68: If a project is going to use internet training, can we include costs for translating classroom based courses to computer based courses?

A: Yes.

Q69: Can we include funding requests for outreach and recruitment? If so, where would it be included in the budget?

A: No. Applicants must include information about participants in the Need for Training portion of the application.

Q70: Can we apply for funding to pay back student loans taken out prior to this grant?

Q71: If the contract starts in January, 2007 but a program began in September, 2006, will this funding cover the period of September through December?

A: No.

Q72: If a facility were to hire a qualified instructor, instead of sending employees out to an educational institution, could we put this person's salary in the grant proposal?

Q73: If an LPN is in school and has completed one year toward an RN degree, would funding the remainder of training be an eligible cost?

Q74: If we apply to train LPNs as RNs, would the costs of bringing in agency workers as replacement staff be eligible for funding?

Q75: If a staff person spends 20% of their time on this program, can we request funding for that percentage of their salary?

Q76: If an instructor is not paid by their institution for the time they are working on this program, can we request funding for that portion of their time?

A: Yes.

Q77: Can we bill up-front for the total cost of the training program even if the student will not complete in the first year?

A: No, payment is based on services performed.

Q78: If a person is in training for 2-3 years, would providing them with a stipend be an eligible cost?

A: Stipends and subsidies to offset reductions in salaries are both eligible costs irrespective of the length of the training project. The program can pay for stipends (fixed payments to help support living expenses) for employees who are taken off the payroll and not replaced. The program can also pay for subsidies to help support employees whose hours and salaries were reduced while in training and whose hours were not filled by a replacement employee.

Q79: Is funding available for surveys or assessments of need?

A: No. A statement of need for training must be included in the application. Surveys/assessments of need should be completed prior to submitting an application and are not eligible costs.

VI. Funding/Award Notification

Q80: What is the number of points to be given for the various application components?

A: Seventy-five points have been assigned to the technical proposal including 15 preference points and 25 points have been assigned to the financial proposal. Please refer to page 21 of the RFA.

Q81: Will projects be scored individually or is the application as a whole scored?

A: Projects will be scored individually. Please refer to page 22 of the RFA.

Q82: If an application is missing a required element for one project but not other projects, will the entire application not be reviewed?

A: If a project is missing any element it will not be reviewed. It will not affect other projects.

Q83: If there are competing proposals in a region for the same training type but the projects offer different levels of services, how will these competing projects within a common training type be equitably compared in terms of cost per participant?

A: All projects under a training type will be scored against one another in the financial evaluation based on the unit cost.

Q84: If we receive an award for a project that is less than the amount requested, will the cost per participant be expected to remain the same when a contract is negotiated?

A: DOH will negotiate the number of participants to be trained with successful applicants based on the amount awarded; however we would expect the unit cost to remain approximately the same in the contract as the request.

Q85: If we receive an award for three projects for less than the requested amount, can we choose to use the entire award for only one of the projects and not implement the other two projects?

A: A contract will be developed for the awarded amount for each project. Contract amendments will be considered on a case by case basis.

Q86: During the implementation of the project, if costs change, can we submit a budget interchange?

A: Yes. Although some costs may change slightly due to various circumstances, it is expected that the unit costs will remain approximately the same throughout the contract period.

Q87: If awardees are allowed to change their budgets when negotiating a contract, won't applicants be more apt to "lowball" their application budget to score well on the financial evaluation?

A: Applicants are expected to include costs in their application necessary for successful implementation of the project, and will not be allowed to increase their unit cost or overall project cost when negotiating a contract. Budget modifications and interchanges may be considered after a contract is negotiated.

Q88: What schedule do you anticipate for award announcements and contract development?

Q89: When will funds be available and when would the contract begin?

Q90: If we do not implement the program until later in 2007, will we have a full three years?

Q91: Can we receive an advance payment?

A: We anticipate making award announcements in the fall of 2006. Contracts are expected to begin in January, 2007. Not-for-profit entities can receive an advance payment on their first year award; however, no funds can be paid until contracts are fully executed. It is expected that contracts under this procurement will end December, 2009, therefore contractors that delay implementation may not have a full three years to implement and complete their projects. Please refer to pages 10 and 11 of the RFA.

Q92: Will all applications compete against those from other regions or only within a region?

A: Projects are scored and awards are determined by region. Projects are measured against the requirements in the RFA for the technical proposal. Only in the financial evaluation will projects compete against each other within a region. Please refer to page 22 of the RFA.

Q93: If we apply with the union, and also submit a direct application, are they reviewed differently?

A: No.

Q94: Can we submit multiple projects and be funded for some but not others?

A: Yes. Please refer to page 22 of the RFA.

Q95: Will all projects with a passing score receive funding?

A: Yes. Please refer to page 22 of the RFA.

Q96: If an applicant submits multiple projects in the same application, is it possible that some projects could be funded and others not funded?

A: Yes. Please refer to page 22 of the RFA.

Q97: Is the regional funding further divided by the counties?

A: No.

Q98: Does the total amount available in the region relate to a one year proposal or all three years?

A: The \$56 million available under this RFA relates to up to a three year period. Funding for the second and third years of projects is subject to continued appropriation of the funds in the State Budget.

Q99: There is a small amount of money available for this program for the Utica/Watertown region. Will you move money out of a region if there is a better project in another region?

A: Funds may be redistributed from one region to another if, at the conclusion of the regional competitive process, there are excess funds available within a region and a shortage of funds available in another region with projects which otherwise would qualify for funding. This has not happened in the past four HWRI grant cycles. Please refer to page 23 of the RFA.

Q100: If an educational institution charging high tuition fees applies, what is the likelihood of being funded as opposed to an institution charging lower tuition fees (e.g., a private institution versus a SUNY institution)? Is it a factor in scoring?

Q101: How is lowest cost determined?

A: The financial evaluation and points are based on a lowest cost formula. A unit cost for each project within each region is determined by dividing the total request by the total number of participants. Each project within a training type and region will be scored against each other, with the lowest unit cost project receiving the full 25 points and others weighted accordingly. With everything else equal, a project proposing to use a private (i.e., more expensive) school will score lower on the financial evaluation. However, a passing score is 75, and it possible to make up the difference in the technical proposal to still receive a passing score. Please refer to pages 7 and 8 of the RFA.

Q102: How will the financial evaluation formula be applied if there is only one project in a given region and training type?

A: That one project would receive the full 25 points because it would be the lowest cost.

Q103: Will you approve the proposed grant in total or will there be a suggestion of changes or approval of a lesser dollar amount?

Q104: How do the “initial maximum awards” factor into the awards?

A: Projects may be funded for the total amount requested, or at a lesser amount. If there are too many projects with passing scores in a region to support their full requests, the initial maximum award amounts will be applied to those projects with requests above these amounts. If, after reducing projects to the initial maximum award amounts there is still funding available, each project requesting above the initial maximum award will receive a portion of the residual funding until all funding in the region has been awarded. Please refer to pages 22 and 23 of the RFA.

Q105: Will unsuccessful applicants be notified of their score and told why they were not funded?

A: DOH will review an applicant’s proposal with them upon request after awards are made.

VII. Labor Union Concurrence

Q106: If one applicant proposes to train workers at two facilities, one facility with non-union workers and the other facility with union workers and labor union concurrence, would the union facility be reviewed more favorably?

Q107: What is needed for labor union concurrence?

Q108: Can you have a consortium with both union and non-union facilities?

Q109: If you have more than one project and unions are only applicable to one of two job titles, do you need concurrence for both?

Q110: If an applicant is not unionized, or representing a group that is not represented by a union, how would they satisfy this preference?

A: Labor union concurrence is a preference for projects training workers in unionized positions. The preference for labor union concurrence means that, all other things equal, if two projects training unionized workers were reviewed, the project with labor union concurrence would receive preference over the one without labor union concurrence.

A letter of support should be submitted from the relevant bargaining agent for a project where a collective bargaining agreement exists with the participating employer or prospective employer covering occupations in which training is proposed. For non-union positions and/or facilities, applicants must inform DOH that no collective bargaining unit exists. An applicant will not be penalized if it does not have unions or submits project for non-unions job titles.

Q111: Have projects been approved without union support? Has there been any grant money awarded to non-union facilities?

A: Yes.

VIII. Application Format

Q112: If a program is being offered statewide and the program is addressing a statewide need, does the applicant need to complete 8 separate need statements, or can the applicant do a single need statement for the entire state?

A: A separate need statement is required for each region so if a project is included in reach region, eight would be required.

Q113: If an applicant is requesting funding for a three year period, do budget narratives need to be completed for each year?

A: Yes. The budget narrative should include a breakdown of the funding for each job title by region and year, however the job descriptions can be written once, provided the responsibilities are the same in each region, and reference made to the three year period.

Q114: If we are training in different electronic medical records modules, would that be more than one project?

Q115: If we are training several job titles in a process improvement course, would that be a different project for each job title?

Q116: If we have different trainers doing the same type of training, would this be more than one project?

A: No.

Q117: If we submit one project over three years in eight regions, how many budget documents would we need to submit?

A: You would need to submit 24 separate budgets, each including attachments 4, 5 and 6.

IX. Contracts/Payment

Q118: Will grant funds be paid through a rate adjustment or voucher? How does the contractor receive the funding?

A: Funds are paid through a vouchering system on a quarterly basis for expenses incurred by the contractor. Please refer to page 11 of the RFA.

Q119: Are for-profits eligible for a 25% advance?

A: No. For-profit organizations are not eligible for a 25% advance. Not-for-profit organizations are eligible to receive up to a 25% advance payment on the contract amount. Please refer to page 11 of the RFA.

Q120: Are there other auditing requirements other than the monitoring done during the contract?

A: All contracts over \$300,000 must submit a single source audit to the Department of Health each year during the contract period. This requirement will be included in standard Appendix A of the contract. Please refer to page 39 of the RFA (Appendix A-1)

X. Program Accountability

Q121: If a person quits or fails out of the program, could we add another individual?

Q122: Can we be reimbursed for assessment costs if the person does not enter the training?

A: Yes.

Q123: Is there a target number of people that we should train?

A: No. The applicant should include a target number of participants that reflects the need and capability of the project.

Q124: If we are targeting laid off health care workers, is there an expectation of placement at the end of training?

A: One of the outcome measures required in the application is the number of participants to be placed in new jobs. The actual placement outcome will be measured against the target outcome established by the contractor.

XI. Other

Q125: The cover letter encourages, to the extent possible, to coordinate their efforts with the Commission on Health care Facilities in the Twenty First Century's efforts to right-size the health care delivery system. How can we do this?

A: Given the Commission's work and recommendations will not be complete until after applications are due, grantees do not need to address this in their applications. Applicant may discuss how

their projects will help train workers that may be affected by rightsizing in their local communities if these efforts are currently underway.

Q126: Would you consider extending the deadline?

A: No.

Q127: Is there a list of current grantees?

A: Yes.

Q128: Will DOH provide the names of organizations that have provided professional and successful HWRI applications in the past?

A: This information is not available.

Q129: Will DOH provide information on lowest costs for previously funded projects in each region or information on average project costs in each region?

A: No. Applicants should include those cost in their budgets that will give their projects the best chance to succeed at the lowest cost.

Q130: Is there a list of applicant conference attendees?

A: A list of names and organizations is attached.